DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 394 562 JC 960 297

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TITLE Enhancing Academic Leadership through Local & Regional Retreat: Adapting the "Great Teachers" Model for Chairs and Deans.
PUB DATE Feb 96
NOTE 9p.; In: The Olympics of Leadership: Overcoming Obstacles, Balancing Skills, Taking Risks. Proceedings of the Annual International Conference of the National Community College Chair Academy (5th, Phoenix, AZ, February 14-17, 1996); see JC 960 276.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Administrators; College Faculty; Community Colleges; Department Heads; Faculty College Relationship; *Faculty Development; *Professional Development; Program Design; *Seminars; *Staff Development; *Teacher Workshops; Training Objectives; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Great Teachers Seminars

ABSTRACT

One of the most important responsibilities of academic leaders is to encourage and provide continuing professional development opportunities for themselves, faculty, and staff. Retreats are very effective vehicles for professional growth, providing an opportunity to discuss their experiences and different issues. For over 25 years, the most effective and popular format for retreats has been the Great Teachers Seminar (GTS). The purpose of a GTS is to celebrate good teaching, allow teachers the opportunity to venture beyond the limits of their specialization, promote teacher introspection, practice rational analysis of instructional problems, and stimulate the exchange of ideas. The seminar is based on the premises that teachers learn best from other teachers, creativity is enhanced by mixing teachers from diverse fields, collective wisdom far surpasses individual expertise, and simplification is the key to successful teaching. While there are many variations on the GTS model, the following three main adaptations can be identified: (1) teaching celebrations, serving specific and more homogeneous groups of faculty; (2) all-college workshops, involving faculty, administrators, classified staff, and students to celebrate things that are working at the college and solve mutual challenges; and (3) meetings for such specific groups as department chairs, academic leaders, or staff. (TGI)

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ED 394 562

ENHANCING ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP THROUGH LOCAL & REGIONAL RETREAT:

ADAPTING THE "GREAT TEACHERS" MODEL FOR CHAIRS AND DEANS

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JC 960 297

Paper Presented at the
Fifth Annual International Conference for
Community & Technical College Chairs, Deans and Other Organizational Leaders
February 14 - 17, 1996
Phoenix/Mesa, Arizona

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Mike McHargue's academic leadership roles have included:

Assistant Chair of Aerospace Studies Dept. (UCLA)
Director of the Learning Assistance Center (Stanford)
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Division Chair of Counseling and Guidance (Foothill)
Dean of Admissions & Records (Foothill)
Grand Poobah of the Honors Conspiracy (California)
Director of the Honors Program (Foothill)
Director of the Teaching Resource Center(Foothill)
President of the Academic Senate (Foothill)
Provocateur of Professional Development
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He has written and been the Principal Investigator of more than 10 statewide and national grants.

His association with the NCCCA began at its birth--when he was leading a Great Chairs Seminar for the Maricopa County CCD and they committed themselves to develop this organization. He led the "hybrid" Great Chairs/Conference Planning Workshop that preceded the first annual conference and he has served on its Advisory Board. Mike has presented at three of the conferences and he led the first class through our National Institute. He has led two other "classes" in their Institute development.

McHargue is a national facilitator for Great Teaching Seminars, Classroom Assessment Techniques, and Instructional Skills Workshops. He has made numerous presentations to college and university faculty on critical thinking, cultural diversity, active learning, learning communities, and student-centered instructional practices.

While he has been working in staff development since 1972, his most recent focus began in 1988 when he became part of the founding executive board of the California Community College Council for Staff Development(4C/SD). He has chaired the Faculty Development Committee for the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges and has written four statewide staff development grants which strongly influenced the professional development sections of California's community college reform legislation.

McHargue has served as an American Council on Education (ACE) Fellow in Academic Leadership and a Fellow of the League for Innovation in the Community College. He won the National Council for Staff, Program and Organizational Development's Award for the Western Region in 1989 and the National Leadership Award in 1990. He has also been honored by the College Reading and Learning Association, the Community College Humanities Association, and the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development.

Mike McHargue holds a Ph.D. in counseling psychology and psychological studies in education from Stanford University. He earned his master of arts degree in counseling and guidance and educational psychology form California State University at Northridge, and his bachelor of arts degree in psychology from Occidental College. He also attended Mexico City College and Pierce Junior College in California.

ENHANCING ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP THROUGH A LOCAL/REGIONAL RETREAT: ADAPTING THE "GREAT TEACHERS" MODEL FOR CHAIRS AND DEANS

Introduction: One of the most important responsibilities of chairs and other academic leaders is to encourage and provide continuing professional development opportunities for themselves, their faculty, and their staff. A very effective vehicle for their professional growth is a retreat--an opportunity for a group of colleagues to "get away" from their everyday chores and venues in order to enjoy the highest form of staff development: well-facilitated "shoptalk."

For over 25 years the most effective and popular format for an excellent retreat has been the Great Teachers Seminar (a.k.a. Master Teachers Workshop--and other variations on the theme). Initiated through the early work of Roger Garrison and refined and popularized by David Gottshall, these retreats have served faculty throughout North America for the past quarter century.

(The following 3 sections are adapted from David Gottshall's The History and Nature of the National Great Teachers Movement, in observance of its 25th anniversary, College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, IL, 1993.)

Purposes: The specific purposes of the Great Teachers Seminars (GTS) have remained basically unchanged since the 1960's:

1. To celebrate good teaching.
2. To cause educators to venture beyond the limits of their own specializations and environments in search of transferable ideas and the universals of teaching.
3. To promote an attitude of introspection and self appraisal by providing a relaxed setting and a straight-forward process whereby participants can seriously review and contemplate their attitudes, methods and behavior as teachers.
4. To practice rational analysis of instructional problems and to develop realistic, creative approaches to their solution.
5. To stimulate the exchange of ideas by building an expanding network of communication among teachers in higher education.

Premises: Every GTS is focused on four crucial premises:

1. In the long run, teachers learn to teach best from one another. Properly facilitated shop talk can be the highest form of staff development.
2. Creativity in teaching is enhanced by mixing teachers of diverse fields, experience levels and interests.

3. If properly tapped, the collective wisdom, experience and creativity of any group of practicing educators far surpasses that of any individual expert of any stature or fame.
4. The key to success in teaching is simplification (less is more).

Distinctive Features: The classic GTS model also displays the following features:

1. There is no pre-planned agenda.
2. There is no pre-planned, distributed schedule.
3. There are no hired experts on education or anything else on hand.
4. There is an agreement at the very outset of the seminar that all behavior and discussion will be positive and productive.
5. There is a significant amount of "free" time.
6. There is a tendency toward simplification rather than complication in the process of problem solving.

More Basics: Other "standard" features of a GTS include:

1. A retreat at a nice/casual setting--usually for 2 or 3 days.
2. Two informal one-page papers written, duplicated and shared by each participant--one celebrating the "good stuff" and one identifying a problem.
3. Close personal and professional connections between an interdisciplinary, heterogeneous group of educators.
4. Lots of small group and large group interaction.
5. Recognition of the expertise of the participants along with their responsibility to select the topics of importance and to share their knowledge.
6. A celebration of good teaching and solution of instructional problems.
7. A sharing of interesting books, materials and ideas.
8. A commitment to use much of the learned material after the seminar.

Variations on the Theme: While all GTS celebrations share the above commonalties, they are all distinct. They vary by the styles, experience and techniques of the facilitators and staff; they vary still more due to the different personalities and issues that come together at each session. I have recently done several conference presentations called "The Sons and Daughters of Great Teaching Seminars." (Notice the "ing" that seems to take some of the pressure off faculty who are uncomfortable in signing-up to go to a Great Teachers gathering.)

This discussion *is not* an exposé of the close, interactive social "bonding" that is rumored to occasionally occur at a GTS. It's a description and celebration of the wonderful flexibility and versatility of the GTS format. That model has been squeezed, stretched, altered, varied, folded (maybe even spindled or mutilated a couple of times) to serve many different groups and purposes. I've had the honor and pleasure of

directing around 180 Great Teaching Seminar-type retreats in the past decade. It has been a challenge (and a lot of fun!) to adapt this excellent format to meet the needs of other groups and to serve other purposes.

In the last several years the GTS "Gifts" have come in some very different packages:

- They can serve statewide, regional, district or single college groups.
- They can serve 2 or 4 year colleagues or "interdenominational" groups.
- They can last from 1 day to a week or so.
- They can serve from 12 to 100 folks for a retreat (& up to 300+ for a one-day version.)

The seminars I've led have split about evenly into three main groups:

TEACHING CELEBRATIONS--
While the "regular" GTS is interdisciplinary, there have been several that have served more specific, homogeneous groups of faculty:

- Vocational Instructors
- New Teachers
- Part-Timers
- Adult Education Teachers
- Early Childhood Educators
- Honors Faculty

ALL-COLLEGE WORKSHOPS--
These started out as "Educational Leadership Colloquia"--attempts sponsored by the California State Academic Senate and Chief Instructional Officers to figure out how to "do" shared governance. They have evolved into "Great College Seminars" where faculty, administrators, classified staff (and students, usually--what a concept!) convene to celebrate the things that are working at the college and to solve their mutual "challenges."

These tend to have more *substantial follow-up plans*--communal and individual ones. Colleges increasingly have a more specific theme than "Great College." Some examples:

Shared Governance
Building Community
Strategic Planning
Student Success
Improving Communication
Serving our Community
Facing the Future
New College Goals
Leaping Toward 2000... (held on Feb. 29)
"Rightsizing" the College
Curriculum Renewal
Developing Leadership
New Majority Students
Learning Styles & Skills
Developing a College Vision
Developing A College Mission
Celebrating Diversity
Reengineering the College

OTHER GROUPS & PURPOSES--

While the "standard" GTS emphasizes interdisciplinariness (or would, if that were a word!), many seminars now focus on more homogeneous groups and issues, such as:

Department/Division Chairs	and or	Other Academic Leaders
Classified Staff	and or	Classified Leadership Training
Counselors	and or	Instructor/Counselor Dialogues
Student Services Personnel	and or	Academic Senate Leadership
Business Officers	and or	Librarians
Staff Developers	and or	College/High School Liaisons
ISW Facilitators	and or	CATs Facilitators

Division/Department Chairs and Other Academic Leaders

There are several more options available for participants of this conference to consider:

- **A College/District/Regional "Great Chairs Seminar**. This retreat for chairs would vary little from the basic GTS. Their one-page papers would discuss good chair techniques and problems; the books and materials they share are more likely to be associated with their administrative and leadership responsibilities; the agenda they build will focus on their chair concerns; there may be more communal/cooperation/institutional follow-up plans.

  A retreat of this kind provided the "conception" of the NCCCA. In 1989 a group of 40 chairs from the Maricopa County CCD celebrated their 1st GCS. I had the pleasure of leading their retreat which was hosted by Gary Filan and attended by Maricopa Chancellor Paul Elsner, and Vice Chancellor Alfredo de los Santos. The primary decision made by the group (and undoubtedly the most far-reaching decision made at any GTS-type activity!) was to really pursue the development of the NCCCA. So you might not be reading this or be at this conference were it not for that GCS!

- **A Great Administrators Seminar**: (Don't you just love that acronym?) Most administrative groups go to great lengths to avoid that "GAS" moniker, especially in my home state of California where the symbol of their retreat, unfortunately, is the "lamp of learning". (Now we know the fuel!) These retreats work well too--with a lot more vertical mix among the participants.

- **A More Homogeneous Set of Academic Leaders**: Another variation could be a gathering of more job-alike folks: a seminar for Science Chairs (or Biology Chairs), for Student Services Deans, or for Chief Instructional Officers...

- **Other GTS Variations**: The Academic Leaders attending this NCCCA conference could be the sponsors/formentors/perpetrators of the other seminars discussed above. They could provide the leadership for an all-college seminar or one for their own faculty. They could also sponsor local, regional or statewide versions.

- **Some Final Thoughts**: I'd like to wrap this up by sharing some of my most recent, most conscious biases with you:
  - Chairs (whether faculty or administrators) should go to teaching seminars. So should other academic leaders. They should participate fully, not as administrators but as fellow instructors. What better meeting ground could there be than a celebration of teaching? The old system--"no administrators need apply"--no longer works.

  - Regional celebrations work well. Our Silicon Valley Professional Development Academy (a consortium of three 2-college districts) is planning a regional chair gathering now, modeling it after the very successful teaching and support staff versions that preceded them. We plan to have 6 chairs from each of our 6 colleges. That allows folks to gain the perspective of colleagues from other campuses, yet still have the "critical mass" of local college compadres who can keep the conversations and the energy going after they return to their home institution.

  - Choose your facilitators very carefully. Most groups bring in an experienced lead facilitator (that's pronounced "leed" not "led"!) but staff their seminar with local small group leaders. Respected, low-ego, high-charisma leaders work best; so do trained Instructional Skills Workshops (ISW) facilitators.

  - Consider hiring a facilitator to "work him/herself out of a job." You could contract with an outside facilitator to lead your first couple of retreats and to train a/some successor(s). It's a good system to become self-sufficient for later (and cheaper) seminars.

  - Come to this conference breakout session. Since most of the information about these seminars is in these pages, we'll use the workshops time to practice some of the seminar activities. It will be interactive, fun, informative, wonder-full--just like a real Great Chairs Seminar! (I can't say a "Great Academic Leaders Seminar"--the acronym is too sexist!).

References

The GTS comes from an oral tradition. Nothing much ever was written down until David Gottshall finally wrote his Silver Anniversary Opus. Here's a sampling of where this article came from...

Gottshall, David
The History and Nature of the National Great Teachers Movement, in observance of its 25th anniversary, College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, IL, 1993.

McHargue, Mike
"Recent Advances in Retreats" -- a series of conference presentations perpetrated throughout North America in the late 80's and early 90's.

McHargue, Mike
"Sons and Daughters of Great Teaching Seminars" -- a series of additional conference presentations in the early 90's.

The GTS Family
You Don't Have to be Sick to Get Better: Improving and Celebrating Teaching at a Faculty Retreat -- a compilation of GTS materials and presentations from the 90's by Helen Burnstad, Johnson County Community College; Larry Fujinaka, Leeward Community College; David Gottshall, College of DuPage; Mike McHargue, Foothill College; Ellen Mohr, Johnson County Community College; Cindra Smith, Community College League of California.

And coming soon to a bookstore near you...
The National Council (for Staff, Program and Organizational Development (NCSPOD)). This national community college professional development group is completing a monograph (1996 date) on **Great "X" Seminars** (not X-Rated, just discussing all of the variations on the theme).